Closure of Zoos in Karnataka

667. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to implementation of new laws of Zoo Authority of India many private and community zoos in Karnataka are on the verge of closure; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) According to Section 38(H) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 Central Zoo Authority is required to grant recognition to a zoo keeping due regards to the interests of protection and conservation of wildlife and the standards and norms that have been prescribed for housing, upkeep and healthcare of zoo animals. The zoos which do not meet the objective of conservation and can not provide the animals in their collection, housing, upkeep and healthcare upto the prescribed standards, can not be granted recognition. Such zoos are required by law to be closed down.

Clean Ganga Scheme

668. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsreport, "Clean Ganga Project bogged down", published in the Times of India dated the 21st April, 2001;

(b) if so, the Government reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to remove bottlenecks in the Clean Ganga Scheme mentioned in the report?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The government has received two separate proposals for Ganga Action Plan Phase-II works for cleaning of Ganga at Varanasi, one from Uttar Pradesh Government and the other from Sankat Mochan Foundation, a non-governmental organization of Varanasi. Both these proposals have been examined by a number of technical experts and committees during the past four

years. The two major bottlenecks in accepting the proposal of Sankat Mochan Foundation by the Uttar Pradesh Government are as follows:

(i) The proposal involves laying of sewers along the 7 km. length of ghats of Varanasi. This, according to experts, will involve breaking of ghats, which is not only expected to result in endangering the residential buildings and historical monuments close to the ghats, but will also cause of great deal of hardship to bathers and local population.

(ii) It is proposed to construct a Sewage Treatment Plan in the flood plains of river Ganga at Sota about 7 km. downstream of Varanasi. This, again according to experts, is likely to endanger the structures of the treatment plant during high floods and may cause flooding and bank side erosion in the upstream stretches.

Both these proposals were further considered by the Government at the high level meeting on 13th July, 2001 and a view in the matter will be taken shortly.

Review of Forest Conservation Act

669. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any communications from the State Governments regarding review of the Forest Conservation Act;

(b) if so, which State Government has sent such communications, with the details thereof in each case; and

(c) what action Government have taken or propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c)Yes, Sir. Such specific requests have been received from the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The request relates primarily to delegation of limited powers to State Government to decide small projects and for streamlining the procedures under the said Act to cut short the delay in according forest clearances.

As far as delegation of powers to State Governments is concerned, it requires amendment in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. However, in view of an ongoing public interest litigation WP(C) No. 202/95 in the Supreme Court in